

# To Be Strong to the Finish You Must Eat Your Spinach

- by Joyce Meyer

I try to be an encourager, reminding people that God loves them and has a plan for their lives. But it wouldn't be very loving of me if all I ever served up were messages about how much God loves you. That would be like expecting to be healthy eating nothing but a steady diet of dessert. To grow strong in the Lord, you need a balanced diet that includes not just comfort and encouragement, but also clear instruction on what you must do to grow in your faith.

In other words, if you want to be strong like Popeye, you have to eat your spinach!

## Yucky Vegetables That Make You Grow

For many of you, two of the yuckiest vegetables on your plate are discipline and self-control. Yet, without discipline and self-control, you'll never achieve the dreams and goals God has planted in your heart, let alone live a life that glorifies Him. If you're going to persevere and be the person God wants you to be, you must learn to practice discipline and self-control.

Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way" (NLT).

There is nothing more wonderful or comfortable than having grown in God to a place where you are at peace with Him in every area of your life. Learning to live with discipline and self-control brings a harvest of peace that far exceeds the short-term thrill of living without boundaries or accountability.

By the same token, there is nothing worse than waking up with a guilty conscience, knowing there's something unsettled between you and God. The only way to settle things with Him is by learning to say "no" to the things that poison your life, and sticking with people and situations that contribute to your spiritual well being. Understand that God has put those people and situations in your life to polish you and mold you into the image of Christ.

Maybe you think learning self-control is too hard. You say, "I don't have any willpower." But discipline is much more than just having willpower. John 15:5 says we can't do anything apart from God. It took me a lot of years of frustration and wasted effort to learn that I could not make happen what only God can do.

## Three Ways You'll Grow

“Spending time with God is where everything comes together.”

If you want to build discipline and self-control into your life, study, pray and linger in the presence of God – and tell Him you know you can't do anything if He doesn't make it happen. Spend a little time every day in His Word. Spending time with God is where everything comes together.

If God is dealing with you about your behavior and attitudes, instead of brooding because you can no longer get away with the things you once got away with, you should rejoice. That's the Holy Spirit coming alive inside you.

## Align with God's Will

God has planted a seed in your heart and it's growing. Believe that God is working in your heart to make you want more of what He has for your life than just getting your own way. You can water that seed by seeking Him with your whole heart. The more you pray, study and read the Word, the more you will see the positive results of doing the right thing, which will make you want to do even more right things.

You have everything you need, in Christ, to be what you need to be. Commit to bringing your life under God's discipline and authority. Ask Him to help you live a life aligned with His will. It may be hard at first, but stick with it and I promise you will experience deeper peace than you ever knew when you were living only for yourself.

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–Joyce

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